THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) According to the UNDP's Human Development Report 2005, the life expectancy index of India is 0.64, the education index is 0.61 and the GDP index is 0.56. Since, these are on the lower side among the countries considered in the UNDP's Human Development Report, India's overall index is also low. In order to improve the living condition of people, the Xth Plan has suggested a number measures which include greater public investment in education, health, improving allocating efficiency of resources, improving infrastructure sector like power, roads, improving governance and enhancing efficiency of delivery system etc. Specially Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and all comprehensive programme launched in 2001-02, is the main vehicle for achieving the goals of Universal Elementary Education. The mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS) has been revised and universalized at primary level from 1st September 2004. In addition to providing free food-grains to the State Governments, the Central Government also provides for converting foodgrains into cooked meals for 200 days in a year. The Plan of action of the Government to improve the various aspects of human development has been incorporated in the Xth Plan and the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Tenth Plan.

Casteism in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

1235. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA:
SHRI BALVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Maharashtra, during the year 2003-04, drew attention to the criticism invited by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan under which free text books were supplied to the boys and girls on caste basis and the inferiority complex created thereby among the deprived students of other castes and the feelings of casteism created thereby among the students;

(b) whether the State Government has demanded free supply of text books to the deprived students of all castes and religions;

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto and decision thereon; and

(d) whether the State Government's suggestion has been turned down and if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (d) The parameters of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) allow for grant of free text books to all girls, and all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe children at primary and upper primary level, within an upper ceiling of Rs. 150/- per child. The Government of Maharashtra had made a request in 2003-04 for extending the same to boys of other social categories. The State Government was informed that this benefit does not extend to any other category of children under the SSA programme.

Abuse of lower caste students

1236. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to the UNESCO commission report on the Education for All (EFA) programme, higher caste teachers have physically and verbally abused lower caste students and the country will not be able to achieve the literacy goals set for the year 2015; and

(b) if so, Government's response thereto and the action proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) and (b) UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 2006, while referring to corporal punishment in schools in South Asia, has quoted such instances on the basis of a UNICEF report of 2001. The Report concludes that India is one of the countries at risk of not achieving the Dakar goal of improving adult literacy by at least 50% by 2015. However, the Government of India does not agree with this conclusion of the Report, which appears to be based on outdated data, and does not take into account recent initiatives and programmes in basic education.

Decline in gender ratio

1237. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gender ratio is still declining;

(b) whether it is also a fact that in many States including Madhya Pradesh, the gender ratio is much below the national average;